

A Rag

After reading: A Journey Round my Room, by Xavier de Maistre, translated by Henry Atwell; [1794] 1871; New York, Hurd and Houghton:

https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/a-journey-round-my-room-1794-1871?fbclid=IwAR15mn614k4-uKgK1Oc-4WihdQ_q8xIliFU4e2ISuZW5MN2ZJccwjp2ylvc

I love the idea – travelling in my home! The first week of quarantine I actually did that – spent each day in one room. I have seven rooms or part of room in my home. Seven days, seven rooms.

I Entry

Take your shoes off. Welcome to my home.

First, let's look at these great gorgeous mountains in the background. They remind the grand Alps. They are greenish from down and the tops are stone gray. The landscape is truly diverse and multi-leveled. The highest peaks disappear into the clouds. Moist fog also rises from the valley floor to the heights, so that the landscape is sometimes wrapped in white cottonwall.

River beds have flowed into the green meadows and forests. There is a lake eye nearby. The whole landscape shimmers in the living greenery.



A week-long trip. I got familiar with every single thing I had in these rooms revisited. I was sorting the shelves, boxes and drawers, wiping off the winter dust, cleaning every corner and throwing away broken and useless stuff, with gratitude ofcourse. I also threw away things, that made me unhappy or what I have kept because of somekind of guilt. That big cleaning was inspiired by the Japanese KonMari cleaning philosophy – live with only these things that make you happy.

II Living Room

When entering the apartment, you will first find yourself in a spacious living room. This is where the basic life of being at home takes place. Shall we sit on the couch?

An interesting contrast with the primeval nature is created by the empty shells of the box houses scattered on the landscape. The familiar, yet somehow inappropriate building ruins in this environment are surprisingly well preserved. How did these dormitory buildings get here? The Lasnamäe box house area has been here since the 1980s, the newcomer is a mountainous landscape. The flat coastal limestone soil has been replaced by a non-Estonian topography. I can't tell you how that happened. Perhaps the continents have started to move differently and the earth is collided in such a way that Tallinn has risen to new heights. The plants are also more reminiscent of tropical jungle plants. Everything is new in the future. Lasnamägi is also new. Just as York became New York, so Lasnamägi became New Lasnamägi. Nostalgic soviet buildings contrast to the exotic environment. Who is sleeping in these apartments now? The rows of window holes have a ghostly effect. But the ghost town is more alive than ever.



Living whole day in one room and discovering every thing in that room – and beware! We are no minimalists, we have a lot of materiality collected by our family-members – was an intense excursion full of discoveries, ideas, memories, surprises. As Xavier de Maistre writes in his wonderful book „A Journey Round My Room“, this trip cost no money, it doesn't include any travelling stress – no need to go to some unfamiliar airports and hotel-rooms. I ate right there, in the middle of my mess and piles, and in the end of the day I arrived in a freshly clean room.

I have wanted to do this spring cleaning for a very long time. Not finding my stuff and living with dusty piles makes me mad. Dark and miserable as the whole winter part of the year. But there was never time – wether there were very important work to do, very important free-time activities - and those two musts took place away from home. Or I was always very tired, trying desperately to get over with housework and just passed the dusty piles when crawling to bed.

III Kitchen

If you step a little this way, you will find yourself in the kitchen area. Let me offer you tea and cake.

A long-necked dinosaur looks at the reflection of the water surface. He's very big. House-sized.

Flying animals fly in the sky. Insects buzz. Everyone eats something or somebody. They look clumsy and are made of clay.



Mundane things are underestimated. Cleaning and houseworks are invisible works. Not important. Not even works. They are seen only if they are not done. Houseworking is multitasking: duties with kids, hunting the food, doing the cooking, making laundry and all the other invisible tasks. But we heroize the great artists, writers, scientists, sportmen – geniuses are visible outside of homes.

Cleaning as an invisible, unimportant, mundane work is Ulvi Haagenen's artistic research object. When she makes artefacts that look like or even function as cleaning tools, she brings the attention to everyday heroes we usually don't glorify. These are the unlikely heroes.

IV Boy's room

Going straight through the living room, you enter the older child's room. This is a small dim room where you are the first to see a digital piano.

In a strange contrast, the background music of the future environment is harpsichord music. Vibrant minuets and short etudes belong to the Baroque court evenings. At the same time, we already have the nostalgia of the ruins à la Piranesi intaglios, the Biedermeier kitsch landscape and the dinosaur-like creatures. Fine music adds a bit of solemnity to this trip.



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Praise the invisible. A rag became the iconic image of houseworks at my solo-exhibition named „Multitasking“ at 2015.

The rag wipes the dust, cleans the sink, table, floor, walls. Rag is also important tool for an artist. At studio an artist cleans brushes and all sorts of surfaces. Wiping on and off the intaglio ink is the sensitive prodecures of intaglio printing. When the metal plate is prepared – the drawing line is scratched or etched, the plate is cleaned, then the next step is wiping the special ink thouroughly inside of the furrows. Once the ink is wiped in, you start to wipe off the ink. With a hand, with soft paper, or with a rag. It is a slow, practice and sensation requiring process. The goal is to get an evenly inked plate to print. To get the contrasty black-and-white (or any other color) print, there must be enough ink in the lines and not too much color on the unetched surface.

V Girl's room

The next room is light and bright. There is a toy store amount of toys, a large drawing table and piles of clothes. Usually there is no room to move in this room.

Printing New Lasnamägi is as playing this world over or around. Worlding. Repeating. Seriality. There is magic in repetition. Repetition is like the moaning of some kind of witchcraft. The wish is fulfilled when repeated. The idea gets power through the process. Printmaking is witchcraft.

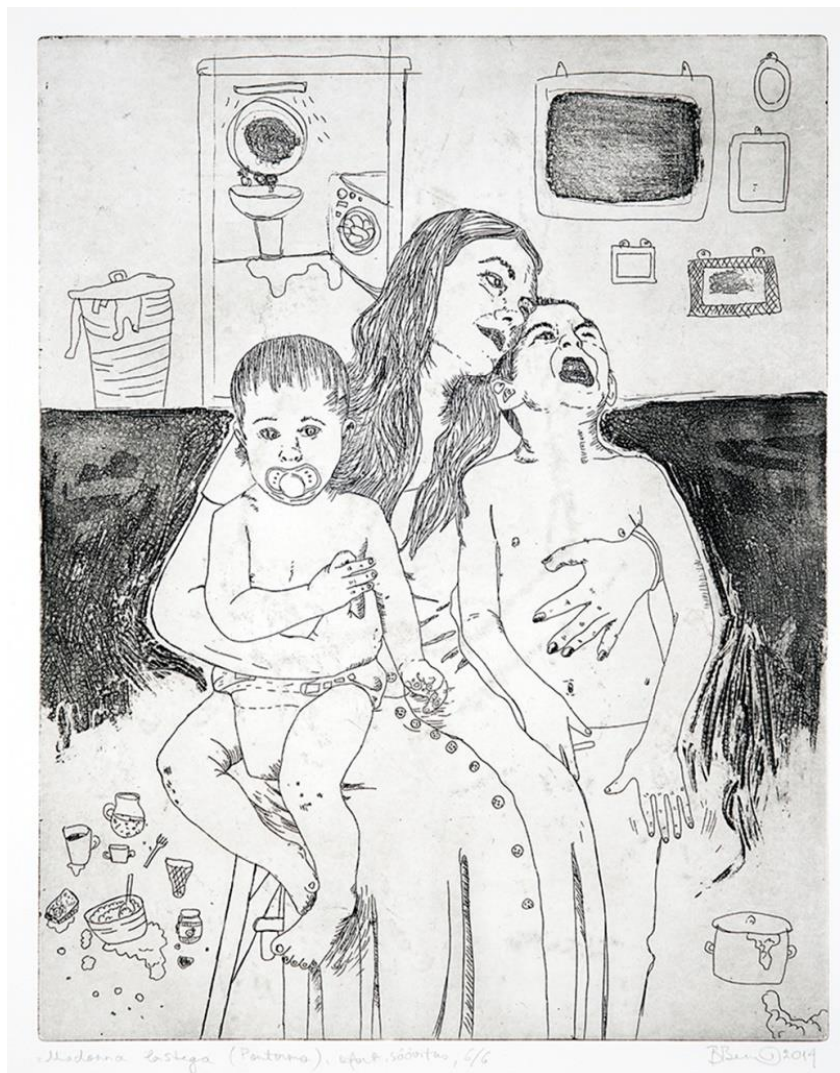


The new situation, staying at home, homestudying, home office – that is nothing new to a housewife. Kids are happy they can stay at homes, not dragged to different institutions, sleeping long in mornings. I have been „home-officing“ for two years, so I know very well, how not well this place works for the outside-house-works when kids are at home. Luckily I can escape now to my new quarantine-nest – to my personal artstudio. Making art is very much about distancing, focusing and being alone – so the quarantine is perfect situation for going on with my artworks, actually. Thanks to the quarantine I feel whole again.

VI Bedroom

This is a dark, purple-coloured room where visitor can take just a peek.

Put on your glasses and you whole world will become spatial. Red and green glass create a stereoscopic effect. It opens up a new way of seeing.



I have ended my tour in my home for this week. What a journey! Now I need to rest. Maybe take a bath. Or escape from housework to artwork. Discovering the next continent. Get out of the jail.

VII Bathroom

Here you definitely want to wash your hands long and thoroughly. The door will not lock if you want to go to the toilet.



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List of repros:

- (1) Dystopic Uno Building, Wien. Hybrid drawing on a found oil painting. 2018.
- (2) New Lasnamägi. A sketch for an etching. 2020.
- (3) Dystopic St John Church, Tallinn. A snapshot of an animation projected on hybrid drawing. 2017.
- (4) Repeatings On a Carpet. A snapshot of an animation projected on an installation. 2015.
- (5) A Rag. Installation, gypsum sculpture. 2015.
- (6) Madonna with Children (Pontormo). Etching, Aquatint. 2015.
- (7) Dystopic Mustamäe. A 3D sketch for a wall drawing. 2019.